

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 14357 060904Z

13

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 SCCT-01 /059 W
----- 103414

R 060750Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8921

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 14357

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, RP

SUBJECT: MARCOS PREDICTS MINDANAO PEACE IN OUR TIME

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED REMARKS BEFORE MULTIA-
NATIONAL CORPORATION EXECUTIVES ON DEC 5 PRESIDENT MARCOS
PREDICTED EARLY SOLUTION TO MUSLIM REBELLION THANKS TO
NEGOTIATIONS AIDED BY INDONESIANS AND MALAYSIANS. HIS RE-
MARKS CLEARLY PART OF ONGOING PR EFFORT AND ALTHOUGH RE-
BELLION IS IN SOMETHING OF A LULL AT THE MOMENT (REASONS
FOR WHICH NOT ALTHOGETHER CLEAR) IT COULD EASILY FLARE
AGAIN TO HIGH LEVELS OF VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. MANILA PRESS GAVE UNIFORM HEAVY PLAY TO MARCOS PRE-
DICTION BEFORE "BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL" GROUP ON DEC 5
THAT THERE WILL BE AN EARLY SOLUTION TO THE "MUSLIM
PROBLEM" IN MINDANAO AND SULU. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION
FROM AUDIENCE, PRESIDENT RECOUNTED PROGRESS MADE SINCE MARCH
WHEN SEVERAL MINDANAO TOWNS WERE UNDER REBEL CONTROL. HE
SAID GOP IS NOW ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH REBEL
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PAGE 02 MANILA 14357 060904Z

LEADERS AND THAT MALAYSIAN AND INDONESIAN CHIEF EXECUTIVES

ARE HELPING THIS EFFORT. PRESS QUOTES MARCOS AS SAYING, "IT IS MY FEELING THAT WITH PRESIDENT SUHARTO HELPING OUT AND MALAYSIA COOPERATING, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SETTLE THIS VERY SOON." AS ADDITIONAL FACTORS IN RECENT PROGRESS TOWARD SOLUTION PRESIDENT CITED "FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE" CREATED BY KUALA LUMPUR CONFERENCE LAST JUNE AND VISITS TO MANILA BY ITS SECRETARY GENERAL AL TOHAMY, WHO PRESIDENT SAID HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH INDONESIANS AND MALAYSIANS AS WELL AS WITH REBELS. (AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN PRESENT CONFIRMS THAT PRESS COVERAGE OF MARCOS REMARKS WAS ACCURATE.)

2. COMMENT : ALTHOUGH HEADLINES UNUSUALLY LARGE, MARCOS REMARKS DID NOT DIFFER IN SUBSTANCE FROM PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT FORECASTS OF EARLY SUCCESS IN COPING WITH MUSLIM REBELLION. HIS WIDELY PUBLICIZED RESPONSE TO QUERY ON STATUS OF THE REBELLION IS AN OBVIOUS ATTEMPT TO REASSURE MULTINATIONAL MAGNATES (AND PHILIPPINE PUBLIC) THAT REBELLION PRESENTS NO SERIOUS THREAT TO STABILITY (OR INVESTMENT). STATEMENT CERTAINLY CANNOT BE TAKEN AS FRANK ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION.

3. AT PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VARIES FROM AREA TO AREA BUT REBELLION IS NOT YET OVER OR EVEN IN DEFINITE DECLINING PHASE. THE LANA O PROVINCES ARE FAIRLY QUIET (AS USUAL) BUT FIGHTING CONTINUES IN COTABATO. (LAST MAJOR ACTION IN COTABATO WAS DAY-LONG REBEL SEIZURE OF CARMEN ON NOV 15 BUT AMBUSHES AND OTHER INCIDENTS CONTINUE.) FOR THE MOMENT, SULU SEEMS TO BE AT SOMETHING APPROACHING ITS NORMAL LEVEL OF ENDEMIC VIOLENCE (WHICH IS HIGH).

4. ALL THIS ADDS UP TO PARTIAL LULL CAUSE OF WHICH IS NOT ALTOGETHER CLEAR. GOP HAS CERTAINLY MADE NO PERCEPTIBLE PROGRESS IN FORMULATING ANSWERS TO MUSLIM SOCIO-ECONOMIC GRIEVANCE, SUCH AS LAND PROBLEM. WE SUSPECT BASIC REASON IS THAT MANY REBELS (AWARE OF AL TOHAMY PROMOTION OF MNLF GOALS) ARE RESTING AND REGROUPING, AND MAY BE TO SOME EXTENT PREOCCUPIED WITH ACTIVITIES OF THE PILGRIMAGE SEASON. RELATIVE LACK OF MILITARY INITIATIVE FROM GOVERNMENT SIDE ALSO A MAJOR CAUSE OF LULL. CURVE OF VIOLENCE COULD EASILY TURN UPWARDS AGAIN FAST, AND GOP CONTROL OVER SITUATION IS ESSENTIALLY NO BETTER THAN BEFORE. ARNOLD
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PAGE 03 MANILA 14357 060904Z

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MOSLEMS, PEACE, SPEECHES, MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, MINDANAO
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MANILA14357
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740354-0587
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741255/aaaabusy.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUL 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <20 MAR 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MARCOS PREDICTS MINDANAO PEACE IN OUR TIME BEGIN SUMMARY: IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED REMARKS BEFORE MULTIA-
TAGS: PINS, RP, (MARCOS, FERDINAND)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005